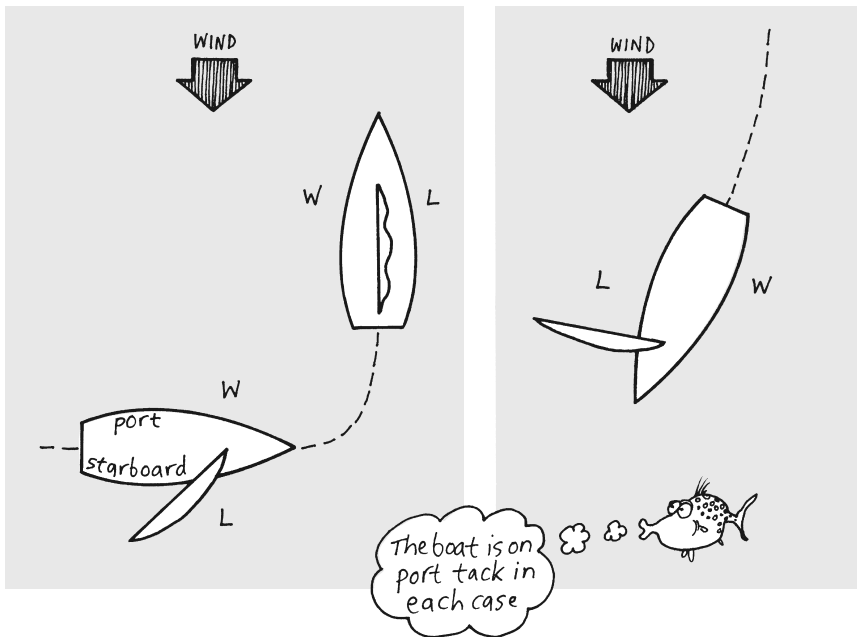


### LEEWARD AND WINDWARD

A boat's *leeward* side is the side that is or, when she is head to wind, was away from the wind. However, when sailing by the lee or directly downwind, her *leeward* side is the side on which her mainsail lies. The other side is her *windward* side. When two boats on the same *tack* overlap, the one on the *leeward* side of the other is the *leeward* boat. The other is the *windward* boat.

The definition *Tack*, *Starboard* or *Port* tells us that we are always on a *tack*, and that whether we are on port or starboard tack is determined by our windward side; i.e., if our windward side is our port side, we are on port tack.

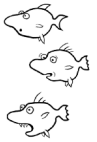


The boat on the left is reaching with her port side toward the wind; therefore her port side is her windward side and she is on port tack. When she luffs up to head to wind she remains on port tack. The boat on the right is sailing by the lee with her mainsail lying naturally on her starboard side. Therefore her port side is her windward side by definition and she is also on port tack.

This definition tells us that our *windward* side is the side closest to the wind, and that our *leeward* side is the opposite side. If the boat is heading directly into the wind, then whichever side **was** the *windward* side before the boat was head to wind is still considered the *windward* side.

The only exception is when the boat is heading directly downwind or “by the lee” (which means the boat has continued to turn past directly downwind without the boom changing sides). In that case, the *windward* side is the side opposite the side the boom is on.

*“If I’m sailing close-hauled on port-tack in light air and heel the boat sharply to windward such that the boom falls to the port side of the boat, am I now on starboard tack; or if I’m sailing by the lee and forcibly holding the mainsail over the port side with my arm, am I still on starboard tack?”*



*No. Remember that when you are not sailing directly downwind or by the lee, your tack is determined by the side of the boat the wind is blowing over. In your first case, when you are sailing close-hauled, the wind is blowing over your port side regardless of where your boom is located; therefore you are on port tack. The same would be true if you are sailing along on port tack, and then go head to wind and push your boom out on the port side to back down. You are still on port tack as long as your bow doesn’t pass head to wind. The moment it passes head to wind, you are now on starboard tack.*

*When you are sailing directly downwind or by the lee, your leeward side is the side on which your mainsail “lies.” “Lies” is used intentionally to indicate that it is the side where your mainsail would naturally lie; i.e., be pushed by the wind, as opposed to by the control of some other force such as your arm, the mainsheet or gravity. Therefore, in your second case, you are now on port tack because if you released the mainsail, it would lie on your starboard side. The same would be true if, while sailing directly downwind, you trimmed the mainsail in amidships. Your tack will be determined by where the mainsail would lie naturally; in this case, most likely it will want to go back out to the side it was on before you trimmed it in.*

*Finally, there is the definition of windward and leeward boat. If the boats are on the same tack and they are overlapped, the one on the leeward side of the other is the leeward boat. The other is the windward boat. Notice that if they are not overlapped, they are not “windward” and “leeward” boats; they are “clear ahead” and “clear astern.”*